

TOWN HALL

MARCH 11, 1944

LIVE IN CONCERT!

PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED!

Eddie **CONWAY** *and his*
ALL-STARS



IN PERSON!

PEE WEE
RUSSELL
"AT THE DARKTOWN STRUTTERS' BALL"

Miff
Mole

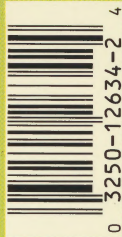
HOT LIPS
PAGE
"UNCLE SAM BLUES"

JOE BUSHKIN **GEORGE WETTLING** **POPS FOSTER**
SPECIAL ADDED ATTRACTION!

Bobby HACKETT **Billy BUTTERFIELD**

PLUS! EDMOND HALL **MAX KAMINSKY** **KANSAS FIELDS**

- 1 **AT THE DARKTOWN STRUTTERS' BALL** (4:33)
- 2 **DEAR OLD SOUTHLAND** (4:13)
- 3 **JA DA** (8:21)
- 4 **Eddie Condon Speaks** (2:47)
- 5 **MUSKRAT RAMBLE** (5:02)
- 6 **ST. LOUIS BLUES** (2:56)
- 7 **HONEYSUCKLE ROSE** (2:40)
- 8 **SHE'S FUNNY THAT WAY** (4:00)
- 9 **IT'S BEEN SO LONG** (3:09)
- 10 **NOBODY KNOWS (AND NOBODY SEEMS TO CARE)** (3:09)
- 11 **UNCLE SAM BLUES** (7:53)
- 12 **SERENADE IN THIRDS** (4:05)
- 13 **Untitled Original** (3:28)
- 14 **CHINA BOY** (5:33)
- 15 **Impromptu Ensemble** (10:31)



TOTAL TIME: 72:26

A HOWARD MELTON PRODUCTION

Source Material: JERRY VALBURN

Audio Restoration: JACK TOWERS

Consultant & Annotation: BOB HILBERT

Research Consultant: LARRY F. KINER

(from the forthcoming book,

*THE EDDIE CONDON TOWN HALL CONCERTS
AND RELATED RECORDINGS, 1943-45,*

by Larry Kiner and Richard Sears)

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THE LEGENDARY
JAZZ CONCERTS,
VOLUME THREE

Eddie Condon Town Hall Concert,
New York City 11 March 1944

COLLECTIVE PERSONNEL:

Cornet: Bobby Hackett
Trumpets: Billy Butterfield, Max Kaminsky,
Hot Lips Page
Trombone: Miff Mole
Clarinets: Edmond Hall, Pee Wee Russell
Pianos: Joe Bushkin, Cliff Jackson
Guitar: Eddie Condon
Basses: Bob Casey, Pops Foster
Drums: Kansas Fields, George Wettling
Vocal: Hot Lips Page

**1) AT THE DARKTOWN
STRUTTERS' BALL (4:33)**

(Shelton Brooks, 1914)

Band: Kaminsky/Mole/Russell/Jackson/
Foster/Wettling.

Solos: Jackson, Russell, Kaminsky, Mole,
Wettling.

2) DEAR OLD SOUTHLAND (4:13)

(Henry Creamer & Turner Layton, 1917)

Band: Kaminsky/Mole/Russell/Jackson/
Foster/Wettling.

Solos: Jackson (introduction), Mole (feature),
Russell.

3) JA DA (8:21)

(Bob Carleton, 1922)

Band: Hackett/Kaminsky/Mole/Russell/
Jackson/Foster/Wettling.

Solos: Jackson, Russell, Mole, Hackett (feature)

4) EDDIE CONDON SPEAKS (2:47)

5) MUSKRAT RAMBLE (5:02)

(Ray Gilbert & Edward "Kid" Ory, 1926)

Band: Hackett/Kaminsky/Mole/Russell/
Jackson/Condon/Casey/Wettling.

Solos: Jackson, Mole, Kaminsky, Russell,
Hackett, Wettling.

6) ST. LOUIS BLUES (2:56)

(William C. Handy, 1914)

Solo feature: Jackson, backed by Fields.

7) HONEYSUCKLE ROSE (2:40)

(Andy Razaf & Thomas "Fats" Waller, 1929)

Solo feature: Jackson, backed by Fields.

8) SHE'S FUNNY THAT WAY

(4:00)

(Richard A. Whiting & Neil Moret, 1929)

Band: Butterfield (feature)/Bushkin/Casey/
Wettling.

9) IT'S BEEN SO LONG (3:09)

(Walter Donaldson & Harold Adamson, 1936)

Band: Hall (feature)/Bushkin/Casey/
Wettling.

**10) NOBODY KNOWS (AND
NOBODY SEEMS TO CARE)**

(3:09)

(Irving Berlin, 1919)

Band: Hackett (feature)/Bushkin/Casey/
Wettling.

11) UNCLE SAM BLUES (7:53)

(Oran "Hot Lips" Page, 1944)

Band: Hackett/Kaminsky/Page (trumpet &
vocal feature)/Mole/Hall/Russell/Jackson/
Casey/Foster/Wettling.

Solos: Jackson (introduction), Page, Russell,
Mole, Page, Hall, Mole, Jackson, Wettling,
Foster, Casey, Hackett.

12) SERENADE IN THIRDS (4:05)

(Joe Bushkin, 1940)

Solo feature: Bushkin, backed by Fields.

13) UNTITLED ORIGINAL (3:28)

(Joe Bushkin)

Solo feature: Bushkin, backed by Fields.

14) CHINA BOY (5:33)

(Phil Boutelje & Richard A. Winfree, 1922)

Band: Hall (feature)/Bushkin/Casey/Wettling.

15) IMPROMPTU ENSEMBLE (10:31)

(Ad-lib)

Band: Hackett/Butterfield/Kaminsky/Page/
Mole/Hall/Russell/Bushkin/Jackson/
Condon/Casey/Foster/Fields/Wettling.

Solos: Bushkin (introduction), Jackson,
Kaminsky, Russell, Mole, Casey, Wettling,
Hackett, Butterfield, Hall, Mole, Bushkin,
Hackett, Jackson, Page, Casey, Wettling,
Russell, Kaminsky, Wettling, Page, Mole,
Wettling.

CONUNDRUMS IN CONDONIA

by BOB HILBERT

For fans of Eddie Condon's brand of jazz, the famous Town Hall concert series (a term more generic than geographic since most of the concerts originated from the Ritz Theater) stands as the greatest document of this kind of music. The concerts comprise the bulk of preserved Condonia, a fortuitous result of the establishment of the Armed Forces Radio Service, which was responsible for the preservation of so much jazz during World War II. The AFRS issued 48 transcriptions of 30-minute shows (several were composites of previous concerts, while some of the concerts did not appear on the transcriptions). In addition, 30-minute segments of 46 one-hour concerts were broadcast nationally beginning May 20, 1944, and home hobbyists inscribed many selections onto acetate discs. Many titles have been issued and reissued throughout the years on every format from 78s to CDs.

So, a lot was known about the broadcasts.

Bozy White's *The Eddie Condon Town Hall Broadcasts 1944-45* is the authoritative work on the subject. Still, there were pieces that didn't fit. Collectors knew, for example, that the Town Hall regulars went into recording studios on several occasions, once to cut two 15-minute "demonstration" programs in an attempt to get Chesterfield cigarettes to sponsor the show. On two other occasions, they waxed transcriptions for the Associated company (see Stash ST-CD-530 for a portion of this material).

But there were other performances, obviously recorded before live audiences, that appeared on a State Department transcription series (*Notes on Jazz*) that could not be traced to any of the known shows. Other odds and ends floating around on poor quality tapes included two 15-minute shows with a Portuguese announcer.

Some thought the latter might have been drawn from an ill-fated project, a joint


government-business venture to establish a 300-station network of educational radio stations throughout Latin America. It was known, for example, that the very first concert, produced by Ernest Anderson and billed as a "Chiaroscuro Concert" with Condon's name appearing only as "m.c.," was held at 5:30 p.m. in Town Hall on February 21, 1942, and recorded for use on the Latin network. The succeeding three concerts, on March 7, March 21 and April 11, 1942, were also recorded for that purpose. (The recordings of the 1942 concerts, incidentally, allegedly reside today in the bowels of the Library of Congress.) The war intervened before the network could be established. But the performers on the mystery items were not the same as those known to have appeared at those concerts. Where, then, did they come from? Their origin is contained on the shiny surface of this CD.

Following the modest success of the 1942 concerts, Anderson and Condon began a new season on December 18, 1943. The initial concert was a tribute to Fats Waller, who had died a few days before. The series continued with concerts on January 8, February 19, March 11, April 8, April 29 and May 13, 1944. The May 20 concert was the first to be broadcast nationally over the Blue Network. Thereafter, the concerts were held weekly through April 7, 1945.

Supposedly, none of the 1943-44 concerts before the first Blue Network show were broadcast or recorded. But the evidence on this CD provides incontrovertible proof that at least the March 11 concert was recorded in its entirety. For the first time, you will hear a complete con-

THE TOWN HALL

123 WEST 43rd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.



Eddie Condon Presents

By Johnny De Yon

A JAZZ CONCERT

December Eighteenth, Nineteen Forty-three

ALFRED SCOTT - PUBLISHER - 154 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK
RE 2-184-47

cert including the warm-up tunes and the local broadcast over New York station WHN. This material was apparently not recorded from the radio microphone hookup, since none of the talk by the WHN announcer is audible.

By the time the concert series ended in April 1945, a distinct falling-off in the inspiration department was evident. By then, the

guys often sounded as though they were on automatic, just going through the motions. But on this earliest known show, there is excitement in the air! This is it! A breakthrough to popular acceptance at last! Looming success heralded by extensive coverage in newspapers and mass media magazines... *Time*, *Life*, even *Fortune*!

These were truly heady times for the gang. Servicemen crowded into Nick's nightly to cheer Condon, Pee Wee, Miff and Muggsy. As the popularity of the Town Hall concerts grew, Anderson booked additional concerts at Carnegie Hall and took the boys on field trips to Boston, Philadelphia and other provinces, where they were greeted like returning war heroes. The jazz press, *Down Beat* as well as the smaller cult rags like Art Hodes's *Jazz Record*, also were enthusiastic in their praise. Only bop-oriented *Metronome* was cool toward the concerts, with Leonard Feather and Barry Ulanov especially caustic in their reviews. Theirs proved to be the opening shots in the war between the hots and the cools which would rend the jazz world asunder during the next few years.

While the attitudes expressed in these carping reviews may sound quaint today, the music remains as fresh, unpretentious, spontaneous and inventive as it did that afternoon nearly a half-century ago.

With the first few beats of **Darktown Strutters' Ball**, we hear a rhythm section that has come to play. Pianist Cliff Jackson offers the delicious flavor of Harlem stride while New Orleans slap-bassist Pops Foster provides a

rock-solid bottom, and George Wettling is Johnny-on-the-spot with a swinging beat and inventive accents (here is a drummer who is always listening). Now and then, the boss man adds his strong rhythm guitar to the proceedings. The swing generated by these artists is one of the special treats of this concert. Following Jackson's stride statement, Pee Wee Russell takes two choruses that exploit the rhythmic juggernaut, his interplay with Wettling is a special joy. Max Kaminsky's solo is a typical example of this vastly underrated hornman whose very consistency has seemed to work against the recognition he so richly deserves. Miff Mole, up last, proves that he is every bit as much ready for this afternoon's music-making as the rest of the crew. The musicians in the Condon gang were all fiercely competitive and it sounds here that none were willing to take any prisoners, as Condon would say.

Miff takes over for his feature, **Dear Old Southland**, a tune often featured by another trombonist, J.C. Higginbotham. Listen to Condon's outstanding guitar work and how it fills in the rhythm section during the first chorus. Pee Wee's searing clarinet in the first ensemble is goose-pimple producing. You can hear him thinking during his choruses, as he invents his startlingly original improvisations. Miff had worked out his opening solo, polishing it carefully through the years, but with Pee Wee, what you heard was what he just thought. Sometimes it didn't work, but most often, as here, he created spontaneous masterpieces.

Bobby Hackett is added to the group for his

feature, **Ja Da**, wherein Cliff Jackson demonstrates his lightly loping stride style. Pee Wee takes **Ja Da** to Beale Street at first in what again turns out to be two perfectly constructed, gorgeously lyrical choruses. Miff declaims his intricate solo effortlessly (again Condon adds so much to the rhythm section) while organ chords build behind him. Finally, the guest star takes over and nearly muffs his opening phrase. Hackett's chops during this period were marginal, frequently restricting his note choices to the middle register. But with all those beautiful ideas pouring forth, all those *right* notes, no one complained.

Eddie then confers and jokes a bit with the crew and the audience, killing time until the WHN radio pickup is ready to start. The broadcast segment begins with a "warm up" contrived for the radio audience (the gang was already at the four-alarm stage) followed by a hard-driving **Muskrat Ramble** with Cliff taking a muscular solo, followed by strong statements by Miff and Max. Pee Wee takes two choruses of mounting surrealism. Hackett brings things back to earth before the out-choruses and a well-considered explosion from Mr. Wettling.

Following the normal concert outline, Condon then introduces a series of solo features, starting with two tunes by Cliff Jackson, backed ably by Kansas Fields on drums. Billy Butterfield's ravishing tone is featured with Joe Bushkin's clean-fingered Wilsonian piano on **She's Funny That Way**. Ed Hall's virile Albert system clarinet is up next on **It's Been So Long**, a regular showpiece for him. Hall had

incorporated so much of the 1930s swing style into his playing by this point that it is difficult to listen to a performance like this and remember that his roots go all the way back to that great tradition of New Orleans reedmen. Next, Bobby Hackett essays the lovely Irving Berlin tune, **Nobody Knows**, which includes a compatible Cliff Jackson offering.

As superb as all this music has been, it is only a prelude to the *piece de resistance*: Hot Lips Page's wartime anthem, **Uncle Sam Blues**. The veteran Texas trumpet star had recorded the tune the previous week for a Condon-led V-Disc session and would cut two more versions—one for a Condon transcription session (see Stash ST-CD-530, mentioned previously), and the other under his own name—in June. But the epic of "Fritz and Tojo" never had as great a telling as this extended performance. The selection is the only one from this concert to have been issued previously—on obscure European bootlegs in poor fidelity—and its source has always been a mystery. Hot Lips's horn rings with authority following his vocal. Pee Wee maintains the celestial level as do Miff, Max and Ed Hall. Miff returns briefly, then we get a glimpse of Cliff before everyone piles on. The band riffs out with breaks for Foster, Casey and Hackett. By this point the *Metronome* critics were probably holding their noses and writing derisively about the "whiff of clambake." Didn't those guys have a sense of humor?

Following intermission, Joe Bushkin leads off with his composition, **Serenade in Thirds**, which he plays at a much faster tempo than his 1940 Commodore recording. "Joe's gonna



HERE'S MEZZ IN YOUR EYE: Left to right: musician and raconteur Mezz Mezzrow, Eddie Condon and clarinetist Rod Cless propose a toast to the talents of master engineer Jack Towers (not shown).

play something, but he's not certain what that's going to be," says Condon by way of introduction to the next tune. Joe may have been uncertain about the tune (its title is a complete mystery to me, and probably is an improvisation composed on the spot), but there is nothing hesitant about his performance. The crowd loves it, too. Beckoned from the wings, Ed Hall joins in with a fiery rendition of **China Boy** with Bushkin providing sympathetic backing and a sparkling solo. Foster is back on bass and

makes the most of a rare solo opportunity. Wettling plays his spot entirely on cymbals, then Hall returns to tie everything up.

Some furniture moving takes place next as another piano is wheeled on-stage and another drum set—for Cozy Cole—is set up for the **Blues** finale, aka **Impromptu Ensemble**. Cozy and the dual pianists start the proceedings, then it's everyone for a round robin of breaks (have fun trying to identify all of them—there are a couple of tricky ones there).

After the concert, the gang split for their respective gigs. Condon, Pee Wee, Miiff, Max and some of the others repaired to the bandstand at Nick's in the Village for their nightly gig with the afternoon's applause still ringing in their ears. Ernie Anderson was thinking that maybe the Blue Network would be interested in broadcasting some of the future concerts. You can feel it. It's happening! Time! Life! Fortune!

Bob Hilbert, President of the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors, is the author of the biography *Jazz Man: The Jazz Life of Pee Wee Russell* (Oxford University Press, 1992) and the discography *Pee Wee Speaks* (Scarecrow Press, Rutgers Institute of Jazz Studies, 1992).

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CONCERT!

**TOWN
HALL**
MARCH 11, 1944

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THE LEGENDARY JAZZ CONCERTS, VOLUME THREE

- 1 AT THE DARKTOWN STRUTTERS' BALL
- 2 DEAR OLD SOUTHLAND
- 3 JA DA
- 4 Eddie Condon Speaks
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